

MONTGOMERY

School board member in county council race

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SILVER SPRING — Montgomery County Board of Education member Valerie Ervin declared her candidacy Monday for the District 5 seat on the Montgomery County Council.

The district spans Silver Spring, Takoma Park, Kensington and Wheaton, but Ms. Ervin targeted the whole county when she spoke of the need to "begin a new conversation on the issue of growth."

She said residents are so polarized on the issue, the county can't move forward.

As the first black woman on the council if elected, Ms. Ervin said she would "reach across racial, eth-

nic, cultural generational and class lines to gain an understanding that there is strength in our differences."

She said county residents have shared goals. "We want the best education for our children, accessible and affordable housing, a transportation plan that makes sense, safe and walkable neighborhoods, and clean air and water and green spaces for our children and grandchildren to enjoy for generations to come."

Among those who endorsed her candidacy was Isiah Leggett, a former council member who is running for county executive.

"Valerie is not going to be elected because she's African-American," said Mr. Leggett, who is also black. "She understands the bureaucracy and education. She understands it all."

Leroy Warren, an official of the

NAACP, said Ms. Ervin "is not a black candidate, but one that everybody can put at the table."



Ervin

Rockville Mayor Larry Giammo lauded Ms. Ervin as "not afraid to question conventional wisdom or sacred cows."

Business and civic activist Sally Sternbach said, "Valerie is a fearless, independent voice. She asks the questions that others are often afraid to whisper."

On the school board, Ms. Sternbach said Ms. Ervin "has demonstrated a willingness to take on the special interests and entrenched

power brokers ... to assure that services are provided to those who are often disenfranchised."

Montgomery County District 16 Delegate Susan Lee said Ms. Ervin has worked for the Asian community and shown courage on the school board.

Speaking for the Latino community, Diego Uriburu said, "She believes that all minority groups can work together."

A single mother of two sons who attended Montgomery Blair High School and a 20-year resident of Silver Spring, Ms. Ervin was elected to an at-large school board seat in 2004.

Before Ms. Ervin resigned this month to run for the seat now held by Thomas Perez, she was chief of staff to County Council President George Leventhal.